

# THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT:

*The Official Journal of the Association of Assistant Librarians*

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Edited by F. SEYMOUR SMITH, A.L.A., Hornsey Public Libraries, N.8.

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## EDITORIALS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS.

**Editor's Change of Address.**—Please note that on and after April 2nd, the Honorary Editor's address is Central Library, Tottenham Lane, Hornsey, N.8.

**The Next Meeting of the Association** will be held at Wimbledon, on April 10th, and is a half-day meeting. The Public Library Committee have kindly arranged a Sports afternoon, and facilities are available for tennis and bowls—there is also a putting-green. This unusual and promising afternoon programme will take place at the Sports Ground in Wimbledon Park (adjoining Wimbledon Park Station, District Railway), and members should assemble at the Pavilion by 3 p.m. Subsequently the Association will be entertained to tea by kind invitation of the Library Committee. Members intending to be present for games and/or tea are asked to notify Mr. Henry Wm. Bull, Borough Librarian, Public Library, Wimbledon, not later than Saturday, April 6th.

The meeting proper will be held at Wimbledon Public Library (Wimbledon Station, District Railway), at 7 p.m., when Miss D. I. Ashurst, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, will read her paper on "Present-day Mentality as Reflected in Public Reading," and the chair will be taken by Mr. A. Webb, Brighton, President of the Association. Miss Ashurst is the

representative chosen by the N.E. Division to read a paper before a London meeting, and we ask our members to attend in great force to welcome her.

The Junior Section will meet at 6.30 p.m., when Mr. W. G. Pugsley, Kingston-on-Thames, will read a paper on "How Historical Literature Grew."

**Annual Meeting.—Preliminary Notice.**—The Annual Meeting will be held at Bristol on June 5th, and promises to be one of the most notable meetings in the Association's history. Mr. James Ross, F.L.A., Deputy Librarian, a Past President of the Association, has secured the co-operation of every person and authority of note in the City. Full details of the programme will appear in the May issue, but we are able to announce that the following are amongst the arrangements to be carried out:—

- 1.—Visit to the Central Library, where members will be received by Alderman Frank Sheppard, C.B.E., M.A., Chairman of the Public Libraries Committee.
- 2.—Lunch at the Berkeley Cafe, by kind invitation of the Rt. Hon. the Lord Mayor of Bristol—Councillor W. H. Eyles—who will officially welcome the Association.
- 3.—Tea and Annual Meeting in Bristol University, by kind invitation of the Vice-Chancellor of the University—Thomas Loveday, Esq., M.A., LL.D.—who hopes to receive members in person. A tour of inspection of the new University Buildings will be made under the guidance of W. L. Cooper, Esq., M.A., M.C., University Librarian.

Arrangements are being made to visit St. Mary Redcliff Church, the Cathedral, Clifton Downs and Avon Gorge. We ask members to make a careful note of the date, and to show their appreciation of the magnificent programme being arranged for them by making this the best attended annual meeting on record.

**The Next Meeting of the Council** will be held on April 3rd, and the May Meeting on Wednesday, May 1st.

**The Library Association Council** has decided that from January 1st, 1930, *no candidate will be admitted to the examinations conducted by that body unless he (or she) is a member of the Library Association or the Association of Assistant Librarians.* The scheme for the amalgamation of these two Associations, which has been under the careful consideration of the

respective councils for the past six months, will in all probability be submitted to our Annual Meeting, in June next, for acceptance. Under this scheme all those in membership of our Association at the time of amalgamation will continue to pay the present subscriptions, namely, 7/- (in the case of juniors 4/-), per annum. In view of the above it should be quite clear to all assistants who are not yet members of our Association that their greatest interest lies in taking up membership with us without further delay. It is earnestly hoped that all our present members will bring to the notice of their non-membership colleagues the above important facts.

Members are reminded that **nominations for the Officers and Council, 1929-30**, should be made by two (or more) members of the Association and submitted in writing to the Hon. Secretary, Public Library, Bancroft Road, Mile End, E.1, by May 1st.

**Important Corrections.**—The dates given last month for the Library Association examinations have been found to be incorrect. The Secretary would like those concerned to note the following corrections:—

Monday, May 27th (not May 28th).  
 Tuesday, May 28th (not May 29th).  
 Wednesday, May 29th (not May 30th).  
 Thursday, May 30th (not May 31st).  
 Friday, May 31st (not June 1st).  
 Saturday, June 1st (not June 2nd).

**The Library Association Diploma: Language Tests.**—All candidates for the Diploma of the Library Association, who have not included in their qualifying examination either Latin or Greek and one of the modern languages specified on page 8 of the Syllabus, will be required before the award of the Diploma, to take examination papers in two languages—one classical and one modern—prepared by examiners appointed by the Council.

There will be one examination paper in each language, of a standard at present approximating to that of the qualifying examinations; each paper will contain three prose passages for translating into English, of which two must be attempted. In addition, candidates will be asked to put into English, book-titles from the languages in question.

For the present, no fee is charged for this examination; the times arranged for the holding of the examinations can be obtained on application to the Secretary of the Library Association.

**The NALGO.**—Will those members of the Association who are also members of NALGO please note that Mr. Donald McDougall, F.L.A., the Chief Librarian of the Plaistow Passmore Edwards Library, West Ham, is a candidate for election to the Metropolitan District Executive Committee of NALGO. We feel that Mr. McDougall is entitled to the vote of every assistant librarian, and we sincerely hope that everybody eligible will do what they can to ensure that his usual large number of votes is increased this year to a total sufficiently large to give him a seat on the Committee. He and Mr. Singleton, of Accrington, are, so far as we know, the only members of the profession who contest for places on the NALGO Executive Committees. They have the right to expect every support from library workers.

**School of Librarianship, Summer School in Paris.** It has been finally decided to hold the Vacation School this year at Paris, during the last week of August and first of September, in the British Institute, 6, Rue de la Sorbonne.

Courses of Lectures on Modern Library Problems are being arranged by Mr. Berwick Sayers and Mr. Sanderson; there will be a course on the English Novel of To-day, by the Director, Dr. Baker, and a parallel course on the French Novel of To-day, by M. Abel Chevalley, author of the well-known "English Novel of our Time." These courses will be supplemented by several lectures by M. Arnaud Dandieu, bibliothécaire at the Bibliothèque Nationale, and by Mlle. M. Dandieu, bibliothécaire at the Hotel de Ville, with probably several lectures on French Architecture by Mr. Martin Briggs.

There will be organised visits in connection with the courses to the various libraries of Paris, and other visits will be organised to the churches, galleries, museums, etc. A week-end excursion of two and a half days by automobile will take place to Blois, Tours, and the château of Touraine. M. Chevalley has invited the party to visit him at his country house near Tours, and see various châteaux among the finest in France, which are not usually visited by the tourist. There will also be excursions to Chantilly, Fontainebleau, Chartres, Versailles, etc. M. Mauger, of the permanent English Theatre in Paris, will probably invite the whole party to an evening performance, and other attractions are in view.

It is proposed that the party should leave London at 10.30 p.m. on Friday, August 23rd, arriving in Paris on Saturday, at 10. This will enable them to make the tour of Paris and probably one of the excursions during the week-end.

The whole party may be accommodated at the Cité Universitaire, which is on Montsouris. The cost of the fortnight will be kept very low. The return fare, including first-class and berth on the steamer and second-class on the Continent, is £3 6s. 8d.; the total cost of the trip to Touraine, including hotels and meals, will be about £3 3s., and the cost of rooms at the Cité Universitaire 15 francs a day. Concessions are also being obtained at the various restaurants for rebates on the cost of meals.

Applications for further details should be addressed to the Secretary of University College, Mr. C. O. G. Douie, Gower Street, London, W.C.1.

SCHOOL OF LIBRARIANSHIP.—A PLAY.—“Gobbo, Hys Boke-seleccyon,” an absurdity in the Elizabethan manner, was produced by the students of the School of Librarianship at University College, on March 19th. The plot turned on the Director's prize for book selection, and the chances of Gobbo—an inveterate swot. The plot thickens with the theft of his bibliography on cards, diversified by some very unconvincing cross currents of love. The fun was good and the fooling excellent.

The production was entirely anonymous, but I learnt the author's name was Smart, and I recognised Miss Myers as Tyb, although her own mother would not have known her under the whiskers of Melvil Dewey. The women put up a much more spirited performance than the men who (except Gobbo) were somewhat wooden. Extra and gratuitous applause was provided by undergraduates from the history and engineering schools.

J. G. O'L.

### THE MARCH MEETINGS.

Once again the Association has had the privilege of viewing the Bermondsey Libraries in the interesting process of reconstruction. On this occasion we were invited to the Central Library. Every department showed evidence of careful planning and arrangement, and there was much to learn for those who cared to look. The attendance was large, the evening meeting falling only a few short of a hundred. The visit to Peek Frean's Biscuit Factory was greatly enjoyed.

In the evening, with Mr. Stewart in the chair, Mr. J. V. Summerfield, of the Richmond Libraries, read a paper on “The English Novel—to-day and yesterday,” which proved an interesting introduction to the subject. The shortness of the address may perhaps account for the unusual lack of discussion. Mr. Stewart was thanked at the close of the meeting for his kind invitation and hospitality and for the trouble which he and his staff had gone to in showing numbers of interested visitors the striking improvements which he is so ably introducing into the libraries under his control.

The attendance of 40 at the Junior Section meeting held at Berrymondsey last month was the highest ever recorded. Mr. H. K. G. Bearman, of the West Ham Public Libraries, read an extremely interesting paper on "Book Selection in the Public Library." It was well received and provoked a good discussion. May we again take the opportunity of reminding our younger colleagues in the profession that these meetings are arranged specially for them? There is, however, no age restriction for attendance and all members are always welcome.

## ON BOOK REVIEWING.\*

By JAMES A. BURNETT  
(Sunderland Public Libraries).

The subject of this paper was suggested to me by Mr. J. C. Squire's paper on "Book Reviewing," which he read at the Library Association Conference at Blackpool, or rather by the discussion which followed it and which has earned the epithet "pungent." This discussion, giving rise to expressions of varied opinion on several aspects of the present-day review, is proof if any were needed, of the interest and importance of the subject to Chief Librarians at least, and presumably also to those who hope one day to be responsible to a Library Committee for a selection of current literature. Most of those present will have read at least a summary of the Conference proceedings, and there is no necessity to recapitulate what was said there. It may have escaped general notice, however, that the discussion was followed up by a whole-column article in the "Manchester Guardian" of October 5th, over the initials A.N.M., and that this drew forth a reply from Mr. L. Stanley Jast, whose share in the discussion had been commented upon in particular. There is no mistaking the sharp divergence of view between the two writers, chiefly on the question of what a review should be, and these two examples will serve to illustrate what I propose to emphasise—that there are really two kinds of reviewing. What they are, and which, if either, is to be preferred in given circumstances, will, I hope, become apparent as we proceed.

It is evident from the Blackpool proceedings that librarians in general are in some way dissatisfied with the book reviews that are being written. There is something wrong with the majority of them, and this they would, by helpful criticism, put right. My words remind me of an incident in the first few months of my apprenticeship to the librarian's profession.

\* A paper read at a Meeting of the Association of Assistant Librarians (North-East Division) in the Public Library, South Shields, on 12th December, 1928.

I was asked by an intimate, but by no means bookish friend, how the library authorities, or whoever was personally responsible, made their selection of current literature. How did they tell a valuable book from a worthless one? "Oh!" said I, with knowledgeable condescension, "they read reviews." On my friend pointing out that reviewers were apt to differ in their estimates of the same book, and asking how we discriminated amongst these varying opinions, I ventured to suggest, from the depths of my ignorance, that it was part of the skill of a really good librarian who had studied the signed work of various reviewers individually, to form judgments upon their reliability and so in time to know almost instinctively what to believe and what to discount. My friend's reply was: "In that case you are a critic of critics—a superior person," a retort which crushed me and has left me speechless until this moment.

To revert to the librarian's complaint, it seems that Mr. Jast, in the words of the "Manchester Guardian's" contributor, "is troubled because the reviewer does not always subordinate himself to the book reviewed," and I think this is a fairly general complaint and probably the most often heard. I intend to devote the bulk of this paper to an investigation of this complaint, what it really means, whether it is well founded, whether it is justifiable or remediable.

Mr. Jast makes a strong point in his letter of the distinction between reviewing and criticism, maintaining that the former is "mainly a technical job," and the latter "mainly an artistic one"; adding that, "while they may be combined in the same person, they should be kept distinct in the notice," a term he uses to indicate what is commonly known as a review as we know it to-day. He goes on to say that "it is quite common for one to have read through a long notice and only learn what the book is actually about near the tail-end of it. Surely," he says, "it would be better to review first and follow with the criticism afterwards." Of course it would—from the librarian's point of view. If this plan were generally adopted, it would save him reading through screeds of print, much of which is composed of what may be very charmingly written and cogent essays on a variety of subjects, but none of which "comes to the point." The point, from the librarian's point of view, is the question: "Is this book worth buying for my library?" In a short paper like this I cannot trespass on the large field of book-selection, in order to detail the several different features of a book which play a part in its selection or rejection for a particular library. Those who have been close

enough to the seat of authority to see the pros and cons in action, as it were, will know that more goes to each decision than is stated in so many words in any review. Well then, are we, as a profession, not asking rather more from the reviewer, than we are entitled to get? Is our point of view not a somewhat one-sided one, however relevant to the purpose in hand? Do we not sometimes momentarily forget, as we vent our opinions on this or that reviewer's inadequacy, that he is not writing primarily for the edification and instruction of chief librarians, who form a very small proportion of his public?

Though we may be inclined to think that this question of reviewers' irrelevancy and essay-writing is a growth of recent years, it actually has quite a long history. I first find evidence of the divergent points of view somewhere about 100 years ago.

Let us hear what Samuel Taylor Coleridge has to say, in a chapter of his "*Bibliographia Literaria*," entitled "Remarks on the present mode of conducting critical journals." "Not less meritorious is their ["*The Edinburgh Review's*"] plan of supplying the vacant place of the trash or mediocrity wisely left to sink into oblivion by their own weight, with original essays on the most interesting subjects of the time, religious or political; in which the titles of the books or pamphlets prefixed furnish only the name and occasion of the disquisition." Coleridge, then, is a heretic from the librarians' point of view. He advocates precisely that type of review, which many librarians regard as the bane of their existence, time-wasting, brain-wasting, eyesight-wasting—we know his feelings on the matter, and apparently they are shared to some extent by another great critic of 100 years ago in Hazlitt. In his book "*On Criticism*," he says: "The critic establishes his own claims first in an elaborate inaugural dissertation . . . before he deigns to bring forward the pretensions of the original candidate for praise, who is only the second figure in the piece. We may sometimes see articles of this sort, in which no allusion whatever is made to the work under sentence of death, after the first announcement of the title-page; . . . Whether this state of the press is not a serious abuse and a violent encroachment in the republic of letters is more than I shall pretend to determine." Who shall decide when doctors disagree? According to Coleridge, a reviewer should write an original essay on the subject of the book whose title appears at the head of his article; but Hazlitt implies that this sort of thing is a "serious abuse and a violent encroachment



in the republic of letters." Since the days when Jeffrey and Brougham wrote scathingly of Byron's early poems—and those of most other poets—in the pages of the "Edinburgh Review," right down to the last issue of the "Times Literary Supplement" or "The Nation," I fancy there have been reviews written which were original essays, and other reviews in which the original ideas of the reviewer have been subordinated to the book reviewed, according to Mr. Jast's recipe.

There do not appear to have been any rules laid down, nor can one discover any settled editorial policy about the precise function of the reviewer. The writers of leading articles, on the other hand, are in a quite different position. Those daily perorations which tell us what opinion we ought to hold about the government's latest benefaction or folly, as the case may be, are each part of an interminable campaign to impinge certain opinions forcibly on the public mind, and the individual writer of one of them has little liberty of expression, little scope for the display of originality. The opinions which a leader-writer is paid to express are determined by the political colour of his paper's proprietary syndicate, or in the case of an independent journal, by the individual views held by its owner.

I stop a long way short of advocating that the opinions expressed in book reviews should be as strictly consistent with an editorial point of view as are leading articles, or that their manner of expression should be as stereotyped. That would mean the end of most people's interest in them, and some unemployment amongst budding journalists with literary propensities. But I do hold that much of our professional dissatisfaction with book reviews would be removed if something of that purposive campaigning spirit which permeates our leading articles were to wield effect on the book pages of our newspaper press. Much of the trouble is caused by the fact that the review is the Cinderella of a paper's news items. Evidence of the unimportance attached to the writing of the book-page by news editors, is forthcoming in the most practical way. Osbert Burdett, in a passage on Wilde in his "The Beardsley period," says: "Reviewing is the poorest paid vocation that exists, even in these days (1925), when pages are devoted to new books in every newspaper."

Sir James Barrie, speaking as President of the Society of Authors at their annual dinner last month, gave an amusing account of how he began his literary career. I quote a press account: "He began by replying to an advertisement for a leader-writer on a Midland daily paper, and somehow they

took him. Result, transport, followed by a sinking. He remembered that he had not only never written a leader, but had never read one. The time was summer, and the chimney was stuffed with newspapers. He pulled these newspapers down the chimney by the dozen, that brave heart, and blew the soot off them with the bellows, and sat down and studied how to become a leader-writer."

Now I should think Barrie's qualifications for leader-writing were about equal to those of the average reviewer when he makes a start at *his* job, a job so ill-paid and despised that no man capable of more remunerative work will stay at it long, but will make way for the next generation of unfledged critics. When I was in my last year at school, the English class was on several occasions devoted to an informal lecture by one of two honours students in English literature. One of these decided to take up journalism as a career and joined the staff of "The Scotsman." My informant as to his appointment added that "he had been given the books to do as a start," implying that he hoped to climb from this bottom rung of the journalistic ladder to much higher things, in, I suppose, the same way as Sir Joseph Porter, of "H.M.S. Pinafore" fame, used to "polish up the handle of the big front door" and rose to be the "ruler of the King's Navee!" If we take off about 25 per cent. for exaggeration, I think we shall gather from this episode a fairly accurate idea of the qualifications generally considered necessary for the writing of book reviews.

I think then, that the removal of our professional complaints will begin to be in sight only when there is an advance in the status of book-reviewing as a skilled occupation, and that until this is secured, we are expending futile energy in trying to lecture reviewers or editors, or whoever we may imagine to be responsible, on how they should do their jobs. We shall inevitably be suspected of wanting them to do it in *our* way, not *their* way, or that they should work solely for our benefit, and we shall not succeed in getting them to do that, even if it were a desirable thing, because, as I have already pointed out, the book-page is not produced for librarians alone. The conditions of the modern newspaper, which are largely of a financial nature, demand that its contents must have what the modern editor calls "news-value," and librarians are not numerous enough—I almost added "nor influential enough"—to create "value" for the type of "news" they demand.

Before I proceed to make suggestions for raising the status of reviewing, I will anticipate a criticism which may be made, that my foregoing remarks apply chiefly to the daily newspaper, and are scarcely apposite to the weekly and monthly reviews. They may be thought to apply not at all to the "Times Literary Supplement," whose anonymous reviewers already hold a high status, and where there is evidently some attempt at editorial censorship and guidance. But "The Spectator," "The Nation," and "The New Statesman" are almost entirely without evidence of a literary editorship. They seem as haphazard both in their choice and in their treatment of books reviewed—in one respect, indeed, they are much more haphazard—as any of the dailies. I refer to the time they allow to elapse before certain books are reviewed. Mr. Frank Swinnerton, in a letter to "The New York Bookman," entitled "Evening newspapers and prompt reviewing," which has recently been reprinted in his "A London Bookman," says "Will it be believed that some English critical journals will publish criticisms of books years after those books have been forgotten? 'The Nation' was once two years behindhand. I have known even 'The Times Literary Supplement' to be several months late . . . The old 'Weekly Westminster' was invariably late. It took three weeks for an established novelist to get noticed in its columns. . . . Fiction has for years been promptly treated in 'The New Statesman,' but it has been most amusingly treated in 'The Nation,' being kept over for months and then discovered over and over again, week after week, until all readers were tired of the name of the new discovery. In both these papers the reviews of books other than fiction are very slow. 'The Spectator' has a more respectable speed. Most of the provincial newspapers are more prompt: the worst of them are altogether too prompt, at the expense of value." This last remark suggests that there might be a certain advantage to librarians if this belated reviewing had a good excuse, such as that the work in question had been conscientiously read through and pondered over. We would then get a considered opinion on its merits, which would presumably be more reliable than the result of a hasty skimming, with one eye on a printer impatient for copy. But I am afraid these belated reviews show little sign of such deliberation, and they are more likely to be merely stop-gaps, utilised only when more interesting matter is not to hand. The three papers I have named are so haphazard in their choice that no one of them can be taken as a reliable guide even to the output of current literature. Although they frequently supply a whole-

some corrective to the fulsome praise bestowed in half-a-dozen dailies, they *must* be read in conjunction with other papers, and are most valuable for their destructive criticism. On the whole, I think, "The New Statesman" is the best of the three, especially for fiction, of which I think it gives good reviews, but it has a tendency to be distinctly dry and rather pontifical. "The Nation" has for some time been developing a tendency to favour the morbid in fiction. At least it seems to me to have given undue prominence and praise to novels dealing with unnatural horrors, to the exclusion of more normal work. I should consider it dangerous to select any such book on the strength of a favourable review in "The Nation," without a very strong endorsement of praise by some other review.

Of the monthlies, "The Bookman" and "The London Mercury" are probably the most read for reviews. The former, though it keeps pretty well up with the flood of new books, does not seem to me to have any critical standards, or to show much discrimination between the more and the less important. The paper is altogether too gossipy in tone, too much taken up with personal details about writers, their home lives, etc., to speak with authority. "The London Mercury," on the other hand, although it deals with only a very small selection of books, and is often ridiculously late, keeps a high standard, again especially with fiction. A sort of nobility pervades everything about the "Mercury"—including its price—so that its very cover, and much more its paper and type, seem to be guarantees of sound judgment and accurate scholarship without pedantry.

My preceding arguments might seem to imply that in "The Times Literary Supplement" we have the type of review which I am holding up as the librarian's ideal, and it is probably the nearest thing that we have. Although it comes nearest of all to satisfying our professional demands, it has certain defects; the chief, from the librarian's point of view, being that many of its reviews are simply essays, with the title of a book at the top, the very kind of thing which Coleridge admired and Hazlitt condemned, in the pages of the "Edinburgh Review" 100 years ago. This is especially the case with the leading articles. These articles frequently, but by no means invariably, account for their presence by the titles of one or more recent publications in a footnote, but it is often hard to find any mention of these books in the article, far less a judicial opinion on their merits. They are, however, nearly always first-class essays on their respective subjects; they always appear anonymously, though their authors are some-

cannot be defined is very far from denying its existence. times revealed subsequently, and the quality of the writers engaged may be instanced by mention of only two names, the late Arthur Clutton Brock and Mr. Basil de Selincourt. The "Times Literary Supplement" is sometimes very late with its reviews, and a third fault is one which Mr. Squire, in his remarks at Blackpool, singled out as a virtue. As the "Manchester Guardian's" contributor mentioned at the beginning, puts it, "Mr. Squire seems to favour the reviewer who skims a book in order to advertise its salient elements." While it is very useful for librarians to know what the salient elements of a book are, I think few will be found to agree that most books can be appraised without fuller examination. Again this is said from the public library point of view, and the type of review which Mr. Squire suggests would probably be quite suitable for those responsible for the selection in circulating or subscription libraries, and for most private purchasers.

With these complaints against the "Times Literary Supplement," it is only fair to mention two virtues for which it is unique. In the back pages of each week's issue will be found a number of short reviews of books considered of lesser importance, together with references to the pages on which the longer reviews are given for each book. Beside each entry are given the size of the book in inches, and the number of pages. It is obvious that these bibliographical details are of great value to librarians, and I need not stress how they often prevent the buying of a book because of its unsuitable size, or its outrageous price worked out at so much a page. Another virtue lies in the short reviews of fiction, all but four or five outstanding works being relegated to the back pages each week. These short reviews are really well done, and many of them are refreshing after the turgidity of so much novel-reviewing, by reason of the delightful way they are written with tongue in cheek, so to speak. They help one to keep a proper sense of proportion with regard to the stream of sensational and ultra-romantic novels, as a corrective against the publisher's blurb, the blatant advertisement and the fulsome praise often bestowed on them by a local newspaper.

I must revert now to the problem of raising the status of the reviewer, which I left high and dry, so to speak, some time ago. As in all professions, there is only one really effective way of achieving this, and that is by putting the reviewer on the basis of an annual salary, and it must be a good one. Naturally, good salaries, and all increments, would be dependent on satisfactory work, and as I should imagine there would

be some competition for the higher paid posts, the standard of conscientiousness at least in reviewing would tend automatically to rise. The status might be raised by introducing the literary editorship, impressing a recognisable trend of opinion, and method of treatment, on all contributors to the same paper. We may see this best in operation, as far as daily papers are concerned, in "The Daily News," whose book page is edited by Robert Lynd. The chief advantage that I have in mind of this form of control, is that a strong-minded and fearless editor might ruthlessly expose the shortcomings of this or that type of objectionable book, by selecting examples for scathing review. In other words, he might lead a campaign for better books, in something the same way as a leader-writer wages a campaign for free trade, or naval limitation.

If this plan were adopted, which is most unlikely, a danger arises in that there would be a temptation to increase the circulation of the paper by advertising some literary celebrity as the literary editor. The more celebrated he was, the more likely he would be to act merely as a figure-head, without conscientiously performing his duty of *editing* the work of his subordinates. If he were a veteran, he would probably be, in Mr. Swinnerton's words, "often truckling and over-generous," as even the late Edmund Gosse was inclined to be. His weekly article in "The Sunday Times" was looked forward to by many readers, and the same applies to Mr. J. C. Squire's in "The Observer," but as Mr. Jast wrote in his letter to the "Manchester Guardian," "we read Mr. Squire primarily not to learn about the book he is dealing with, but of how it affected Mr. Squire. Tolstoy on Shakespeare is interesting because of Tolstoy. But when I read the general run of reviews, it is what the "Times" or the "Manchester Guardian" has to say about it, not the particular reviewer, in whose hands the book has been placed presumably because he is capable of describing and evaluating it in a competent manner and with a catholic spirit, and it is he I would have subordinated to the book." However interesting Mr. Gosse's and Mr. Squire's reactions may be to a large section of the public their articles are of less value to the librarian, in his professional capacity as a book-selector, than the anonymous reviewer of the "Times Literary Supplement."

(To be continued).

## THE INN IN LITERATURE.

By H. MOURANT, Southampton.

Ordinary and nice people, do not want to scribble on the walls—OTHERS, please don't.

I saw this notice in a museum, and commenced to ponder over the psychology of those OTHERS who insist upon writing remarks, or their names, or something we do not wish to know, on any smooth surface in any place they may visit.

However, it is not my object to speak of those annoying scribblers, for I am dealing with taverns just now. I dare to suggest that the inn is of more moment to our social life (as we know it to-day and as it was in the past), than any other thing which effects our passage through life. The inn is a popular institution; yet, when we enter one of these time-honoured places, we are particularly careful that Mrs. Jones, or the curate, or some other body, does *not* see us go in.

Indeed, we feel like those wretched scribblers—those OTHERS, who are certainly not ordinary and nice. Why do we experience this inferior feeling? The answer is—because we are humbugs.

Let us for a while, turn to some of our men of letters, for surely the tavern must take a big part in literature.

Very naturally, we immediately think of Robert Burns.

On the parlour window of the Globe at Dumfries, Burns inscribed,

“The graybeard, old Wisdom, may boast of his treasures—  
Give me with gay Folly to live;  
I grant him calm-blooded, time-settled pleasures,  
But Folly has raptures to give.”

From 1790 until the day on which the poet took to his death-bed, the “Globe” was his favourite haunt.

Again, Goldsmith writes of the alehouse, thus:—

“Near yonder thorn, that lifts its head on high,  
Where once the sign-post caught the passing eye,  
Low lies that house where nut-brown draughts inspired,  
Where graybeard mirth and smiling toil retired,  
Where village statesmen talked with looks profound,  
And news much older than their ale went round.”

Some superb “inn” literature has come from Irishmen, but surely nothing quite so fine as this has ever been produced?

What does the mighty Dr. Johnson say of inns?—for he has opinions about everything under the sun.

"There is nothing," says Johnson, "which has yet been contrived by man, by which so much happiness is produced as by a good tavern."

George Borrow's affection for good ale and jolly company is known to all of us. How "refreshing" is his "Wild Wales," and how typical of Borrow is this passage,—“When I first saw your face, I recognised in it a kindred spirit, and I felt compelled to ask you to drink. Drink sir! but how is this? the jug is empty—how is this?—Oh, I see—my friend sir, though an excellent fellow, is indiscreet sir—very indiscreet. Landlord, bring this moment another jug of ale.”

The novels of Dickens are brimming over with descriptions of smoke-stained beams, pewter pots, the tap-room fire, the landlord, the ostler, and every other thing to be found in a tavern.

I imagine Tressall (author of "Ragged Trousered Philanthropists") had no liking for the tavern. However, he was surely intimate with some inn or other to be able to pen the chapters on "The Cricketers' Arms," and "The Bean-o"—which reach a high point in literary craftsmanship.

Here is John Davidson, writing of the "Cheshire Cheese," which, happily, still stands in London:

"If doubts or debts thy soul assail,  
If fashion's forms its current freeze,  
Try a long pipe, a glass of ale,  
And supper at the 'Cheshire Cheese.'"

There is in truth an amazing number of inns to be found in literature. I must mention those lines of Wm. Shenstone's, written at an inn at Henley:

"I fly from pomp, I fly from plate,  
I fly from falsehood's specious grin;  
Freedom I love, and form I hate,  
And choose my lodgings at an inn.  
Here, waiter, take my sordid ore,  
Which lackeys else might hope to win,—  
It buys what courts have not in store,  
It buys me freedom at an inn."

Although my subject is a "refreshing one," I feel that I have said enough to show that our men of letters have always felt kindly towards the tavern, yet before I end I must draw your attention to Thomas Hardy. Maybe, some of you have visited the "Pure Drop," at Bere Regis. Hardy himself probably liked the place almost as much as his wonderful creation—John Durbeyfield—did:



Here is a verse of the Wessex poet's :

" Had he and I but met  
By some old ancient inn,  
We should have sat us down to wet  
Right many a nipperkin."

The tavern has indeed a tremendous literature; many authors I have omitted to mention will leap to the mind to persuade us that writers have always been familiar with the various houses of refreshment and good cheer.

Therefore, IF we want to " try a long pipe, a glass of ale," let us scorn the curate, Mrs. Jones, and every other body, and, like any ordinary and nice person, drink and be merry.

## NOTES ON BOOKS AND AUTHORS.

### IV.

#### THE NOVELS OF WILLA CATHER.

By R. D. HILTON SMITH, Croydon Public Libraries.

My local M.P. has no back to his head, votes steadily against all measures of progress or enlightenment, and habitually bullies his employees. Otherwise I would post to him a copy of Willa Cather's "A Lost Lady," with the civil request that he should pass it on to the Prime Minister who, be his political prowess what it may, has certainly done well by literature. For the captious British Public listens more readily to a politician on literature than to a literary man on either politics or literature; and a word in season from Mr. Baldwin would do more than all the sages can to bring recognition to unappreciated genius. Not altogether unappreciated, perhaps; but there is that in Willa Cather's books which surely should bring the kindling light of enthusiasm to the eyes of everybody who knows a great book when he reads it, and hears her name.

We are too apt, perhaps, to conceive of America as a compound of "big business," skyscrapers, graft, and bootlegging. In truth, her writers have done little to dispel this illusion. Dreiser, Lewis, Van Vechten, Dos Passos—all of these, and many more, have interpreted, dogmatised, photographed, fulminated, over, modern America; but only the America of scurry and chicanery. It has been left to Willa Cather to limn that vast, quiet, enduring America of the farm and the prairie, whose dwellers care little for the speed of life but much for its fragrance. Whereas one may detect, in such books as

"Main Street" or "Manhattan Transfer" an almost feverish concern with interpretation *qua* interpretation, one finds in Cather's "Song of the Lark" or "My Antonia" or "One of Ours," interpretation at its noblest: namely, an exquisite concern with the detailed delineation of character which, mingled with unhurried evocation of "atmosphere," makes the characters move naturally in their surroundings, speak with their own authentic voice, and yet exist not only as individuals, but as symbols too. To create a character who shall present himself to us as an individual, with all the traits and quiddities of an individual, but speaking also as the mouthpiece of a country, of a phase of life, of all humanity in this or that set of circumstances—this is the highest art of the novelist, and this is what Willa Cather triumphantly achieves again and again.

With "Death comes to the Archbishop" she attained, last year, tardy and entirely inadequate recognition. Perhaps the acclamation given to that book will lead to a more general discovery of those other books which reveal so consummate an art, such calm beauty, that news of a new book by Willa Cather should be a literary event of the first magnitude.

## THE DIVISIONS.

### SOUTH-WESTERN DIVISION.

Another Magazine Evening—at Winchester—on May 8th. Please send your essay (500—1000 words) with real name and pen name, to the Secretary. The usual book prize will be awarded for the most popular effort.

HECTOR MOURANT, Hon. Secretary,  
Woolston Library, Southampton.

### MIDLAND DIVISION.

The Christmas Party was again held at the Shakespeare Rooms, Edmund Street, Birmingham, on Wednesday, January 9th this year. The Party was the traditional success that it has always been, and did credit to the enterprising activities of the Socials Committee.

Games, music and dancing were features of the evening. "The Man in the Bowler Hat," by A. A. Milne, and Pinero's "Playgoers," were interpreted by the staffs of Sparkhill and Ward End Branch Libraries respectively.

The third meeting of the session was held at the Reference Library, Birmingham, on Wednesday, January 16th.

A series of papers, arranged by Mr. G. L. Burton, was read on "The Novel of To-day."

Miss Jean Paterson in the first of the excellent papers read, claimed "pride of place" for Hugh Walpole. Miss Paterson gave an admirable account of his life and works, his characteristics and style, his place as

an Englishman of letters, and supplemented this with five passages chosen from Walpole's own works.

Miss E. J. R. Gross gave a good sketch of the work of W. J. Locke. Spending much of his time abroad, Mr. Locke lays the scenes of many of his stories in the gay and festive atmosphere of those acknowledged homes of romance—France and Italy. An entertaining story-teller, Mr. Locke draws his characters with warmth and kindness, which reflect his own tolerant love of mankind and kindly outlook on life.

The novels of Rose Macaulay were described by Miss B. W. Cowdy, with sympathy and insight for that author's gifts of humour, characterisation and language. The three books chosen as best and most typical of her work were "Orphan Island" for satire, "Told by an Idiot"—the chronicle of a Victorian family, with its tragedy, humour and wit; and "The Lee Shore," for its idealism and insight.

The Portrait of John Galsworthy, the "first public man of letters in England to-day," was vividly drawn by Miss D. White. Galsworthy, the man, the novelist, the artist, the reformer, was revealed to us. Rising to "Forsyte Saga" fame, his work will remain to us a monument, perpetuating his gifts as a student of human nature and a critic of modern economic and social conditions.

Miss Sybil Thompson gave an admirable resumé of the work of Francis Brett Young—of special interest to us as a Birmingham man. Trained at our own University for a doctor, he gives a vivid description of the Birmingham known to our fathers and grandfathers in his semi-autobiographical novel "The Young Physician."

Brett Young's genius for "landscape" was stressed in comparison with his often unconvincing portrayals of character.

Mr. C. M. Jackson (Librarian, Sparkhill Branch Library), made an earnest contribution to the cause of R. H. Mottram. Having risen to the heights in the monumental novel—"The Spanish Farm Trilogy," Mr. Jackson was hopeful that there would yet appear some work as great as his already famous masterpiece. "Spanish Farm," "Sixty-Four, Ninety-Four," and "The Crime at Vanderlynden's," is an epoch-making work, for its brilliant characterisation, its masterly handling and ordering of detail and its entirely new manner of presenting historical events. Mottram has succeeded in producing a subtle combination of the historical novel, the novel of character and a history of the war in "The Spanish Farm Trilogy."

Mr. G. L. Burton (Librarian, Central Lending Library), concluded with a general survey of the novel of to-day, along three main lines—psychological, biographical or autobiographical, of which perhaps the most famous is Compton Mackenzie's "Sinister Street"; and the sociological type of novel, such as Stephen McKenna's "Sonia." Mr. Burton stressed the introspective element in modern fiction, and touched briefly on individual work of the "lesser lights" of the day, within broad classes, subsidiary groups and minor sub-divisions—and beyond. The giants had regrettably to be left on their lonely heights owing to the scope and limits of a "General Survey."

Mr. H. Grindle proposed a very cordial vote of thanks to the readers of the papers and to Mr. G. L. Burton for arranging them, which was seconded by Miss M. G. Baker. Mr. Burton replied.

E. B.

#### NORTH-EAST DIVISION.

The Annual Meeting of the Division will be held at the Gateshead Public Library on Wednesday, April 10th, 1929, at 6.30 p.m.

## SHORT NOTICES.

Bromley Library Journal, No. 5.

Halifax Readers' Guide, No. 11.

Leeds Commercial and Technical Library Bulletin.

Contains a very full list of books on coal, its constitution, analysis and chemistry, and on low temperature carbonisation.

Sheffield: New Books—List No. 17.

Among the new books listed herein (they constitute the cream of the latest publications) we notice Eddington's *The Nature of the Physical World*. It may be of general interest to note here that this difficult and brilliant book is classified at 113. There must be many divergent opinions concerning the placing of this book. The philosophical trend of modern physics should remind us that the old name for this subject was Natural Philosophy; on the other hand no student of the books classed at 530 will ever need Eddington's summary to obtain his B.Sc., so that probably cosmology is the better place. Many "Brown" libraries, by the way, are placing the book at B001.5.

Walthamstow. Catalogue of Books added during 1928.

This list unfortunately excludes poetry, drama, music and fiction. The selection reaches a high standard.

Boston (U.S.A.). More Books: Bulletin—January.

*Contents*:—Shakespeare in Hungary (part of a very valuable survey); Ten Books; A Selected list of books recently added (these are catalogued superlatively well).

Bulletin of the American Library Association.

Amongst other interesting items a note is inserted concerning the French Library Association, which is holding a conference in 1929. "The programme of the conference is entirely reserved for the town libraries, whose situation is alarming; six librarians are needed in several of the biggest ones, and there is no application because the salaries are too small."

Port Elizabeth Public Library: 80th Annual Report.

Stock: 59,000; Books, building and newspapers expenditure: £1,534; Issues: 194,653; Subscribers: 2,403.

F. W. Dixon Company's Bulletin of Bibliography, No. 7.

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## OUR LIBRARY.

*Books for Boys and Girls. Public Library of Toronto, Canada.*  
Cloth boards, pp. 290. 5½ by 7¼ in. \$2 postage paid.

This is the best catalogue of children's books we have seen since Glasgow published its excellent one some seven or eight years ago. We cannot describe the Toronto catalogue better than the preface does: "This book is the result of the years of our experience in the boys' and

girls' division of the Public Library of Toronto in our search for books which would stand the test of time. They reflect the judgment of the children themselves, and of the Librarians who have been closely observing and carefully noting the likes and dislikes of their youthful visitors. It is not a list of books which we think 'every child should read,' but a list of which we think boys and girls will be able to select books which will give pleasure, and be of interest and value. The comment upon these books is not taken from reviews. It is home-made—the views of the twenty-five librarians to whom is entrusted the education of the boys and girls of our City, through the Public Library. . . . Miss Lillian Smith, the Head of the Boys' and Girls' House of that Division of our Library is the Editor."

The catalogue is in author arrangement with title index—we imagine a subject index will be missed greatly and its absence in a list of these dimensions is unaccountable. The cataloguing in the main body of the work approaches perfection. The entries and annotations are full, and the publishers and prices are given. Every librarian in England will find the catalogue of great value as a select bibliography. The price is stiff, according to standards in this country, where a catalogue which costs five shillings a copy is sold for sixpence, but we hope that this will not prevent its circulation in the homes of parents of Toronto. Once again we must plead for the insertion of more "adult" books for children. For instance, a large majority of youngsters of all ages and both sexes will thoroughly enjoy *The Prisoner of Zenda* and its sequel, all of Wells' scientific stories, most of W. W. Jacobs' stories, and the *Scarlet Pimpernel* series, *Sard Harker*, etc., why therefore should these and similar books be absent from this and nearly every other children's catalogue? In the main, however, the selection has been done with great care and success, and we are all under an obligation to Toronto for providing us with such an excellent piece of work.

F. S. S.

*Master makers of the Book: being a consecutive story of the Book from a century before the invention of printing through [sic] the era of the Doves Press. By William Dana Orcutt. (Cr. 8vo., cloth, pp. 271. Frontis. Allen & Unwin, 8/6 net.)*

However often the story of printing is told, it remains one of the stateliest chapters of human history. I, for one, cannot think of those pioneers of the craft, Gutenberg, Zainer, Aldus Manutius (that noble artist and nobler man), without exhilaration. Columbus himself, gambling with chance on unknown waters, is not a more romantic figure than these. Striking one of the first, and indubitably one of the doughtiest, blows against ignorance, bigotry and class-exploitation, they have an honoured place in the epic (by no means finished yet) of the emancipation of mankind. They were great reformers. The miracle is that they were also great artists. For, not content with the epoch-making act of printing books, they also printed them with a sumptuousness that was to find no parallel for four centuries. Study a page of the Aldine or Jenson roman and then think of the barbaric tools with which it was produced. It is amazing. It is as if Vermeer had painted his "View of Delft" with a child's paintbox! This is the astounding thing about printing: it was mature at its birth. As a craft it developed. As an art it could not develop. William Morris proved the truth of this when he turned for inspiration to Jenson and Zainer.

Such is the story which Mr. Orcutt has to tell. And very interestingly he tells it. His method is not that of, for example, Duff and Pollard: a rich and leisurely accumulation of detail. He treats his subject broadly and sketchily, concentrating upon salient figures and tendencies. (His sketches may be gauged from the fact that printers so important as Koberger and Pfister are disregarded). Furthermore, he confines himself strictly to printing. But this eliminative method serves to throw the distinctive periods of printing into vivid relief. Thus, Aldus and his compeers are chosen to represent the *zeitgeist* of humanism; Etienne and Elziver, the commercial extension and ultimate defection of the craft; while the final period, of which Baskerville was the precursor and Morris the consummation, witnesses the recrudescence of craftsmanship. Throughout, we are made to see book-making not as an isolated energy, but as part of the general continuum of history. The result is an admirable book: for the layman, a record which kindles the imagination; for the student, an outline plan whose secondary landmarks he must fill in for himself. It will whet the student's appetite. If he pursues the subject further, he will find large tracts of ground which Mr. Orcutt has left untouched: notably printing in England during the 16th century, when men like de Worde and Day, and even the lesser printers such as Pynson and Notary, printed with a real sense of the integrity of their craft. But he will have reason to be grateful to Mr. Orcutt for reducing the crowded annals of printing to an outline so firm and explicit. The book is furnished with a bibliography (somewhat meagre) and an index which is perfection itself. It is strongly recommended to students of section 2 of the Library Association examinations.

STANLEY SNAITH.

*Other reviews unavoidably held over.*—Hon. Ed.

## POEMS FROM A PRIVATE ANTHOLOGY.

### IV.

Hie upon Hielands  
And low upon Tay,  
Bonnie George Campbell  
Rade out an a day.  
Saddled and bridled  
And gallant rade he;  
Hame cam his gude horse,  
But never cam he.

Out cam his auld mither  
Greeting fu' sair,  
Out cam his bonnie bride  
Rivin' her hair.  
Saddled and bridled  
And bootied rade he;  
Toom hame cam the saddle,  
But never cam he.

"My meadow lies green,  
 And my corn is unshorn;  
 My barn is too big  
 And my baby's unborn."  
 Saddled and bridled  
 And bootied rade he;  
 Toom hame cam the saddle,  
 But never cam he.

WILLIAM MOTHERWELL.

### CORRESPONDENCE.

*The Editor, THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT.*

DEAR SIR,—In July, 1921, when I had the privilege of editing *The Library Assistant*, I wrote an editorial regretting the appointment of a non-municipal librarian to the post of Lecturer in the University of London School of Librarianship. The lecturer in question was, of course, Mr. C. R. Sanderson, and I felt very strongly at the time, as did my colleagues on the Council, that the appointment could have been much more usefully given to a progressive municipal librarian.

To-day, however, when I am in a better position to judge fairly, I can say confidently that the School of Librarianship has no better lecturer on its panel than Mr. Sanderson. He has fully justified his appointment, and in view of the fact that he is now about to leave England to serve under Doctor Locke at Toronto, I should like to take this opportunity of expressing my personal appreciation of Mr. Sanderson's work, not only at the School of Librarianship, but also as a teacher for the Library Association. All the educational work that Mr. Sanderson has undertaken has been carried out in a most conscientious and thorough manner, and he has always had the interests of assistant librarians closely at heart. It may not be common knowledge to many of your readers that it was largely due to his efforts that the Correspondence Course fees were recently reduced by that Association.

His departure for Canada will be a real loss to British Librarianship, and, in particular, to the younger members of the profession who will be deprived of his tuition, but it will result, I am sure, in a closer relationship between the Mother Country and Canada.

Yours, etc., HENRY A. SHARP,

Deputy Librarian, Croydon Public Libraries.

### NEW APPOINTMENTS.

LEEDS.—Mr. W. M. Dickie, M.A., Ph.D. (four L.A. Certificates), of the Cambridge University Library, has been appointed Assistant Reference Librarian. Other applicants selected for the interview were Andrew Raeburn, Mitchell Library, Glasgow, and F. C. Adey, Reference Library, Manchester. Salary, £250 per annum, rising to £350.

FULHAM.—Mr. W. T. Creed, the Deputy Librarian of Fulham, has been promoted to the position of Borough Librarian, as a consequence

of Mr. Walker's appointment at Hendon, noted last month. The new appointment at Fulham carries with it a commencing salary of £350, rising by annual increments of £15 to a maximum of £450, plus a bonus.

**HORNSEY.**—Mr. F. Seymour Smith, Chief Assistant at Bethnal Green Library since its inception in 1919 and Honorary Editor of *The Library Assistant* since January, 1927, has been appointed Deputy Librarian at Hornsey, at a commencing salary of £325 per annum, rising by three annual increments of £25 to £400. Mr. Seymour Smith possesses the London Matriculation Certificate, the six L.A. Certificates (three "with merit") and has recently had a thesis on classical translations accepted by the Library Association. The final selection included Messrs. Jackson (Birmingham), and Hunt (Tottenham).

#### NEW MEMBERS:

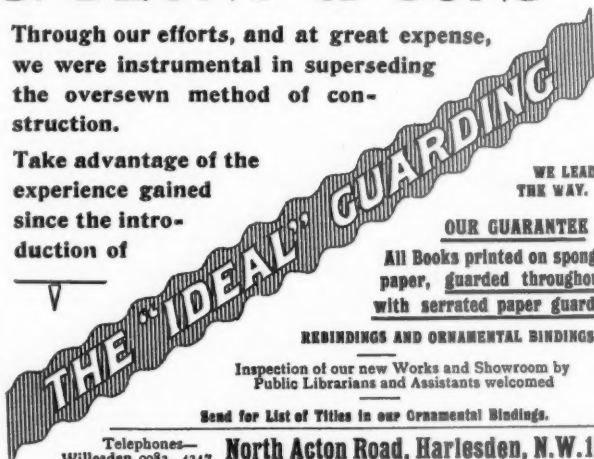
*Member.*—Elizabeth M. A. Mather (Croydon).

*Midland Division: Associates.*—Winifred M. Lacy, Winifred M. Joselin (Birmingham).

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